TWILIGHT AND DAWN

Myrtle Ryding
lutheran Sunday School
Genoa, Nebr., Christmas 192

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"God bless you, my child, God bless you." Page 35.

Twilight and Dawn

A Story for Children

By

N. FRIES

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CHAPTER 1.

The Bauer Cottage.

Twilight Lane—so the street was called. It had, no doubt, received this name because it was so dark and narrow, and because the old houses on either side projected their gables, so that daylight could not penetrate to the street except for a few minutes each day, when the chimes of St. Paul's church announced the hour of noon. All the rest of the day twilight held sway.

On this street there stood a house, or rather a cottage—an ancient, low one-story building. Its front was scarred and seamed with age, like the wrinkled features of an old man, and centuries, rather than mere years, marked its span of existence. Its small, leaded windows were so grimy and untransparent that one won-

dered if they had ever been bright and clear. And the door! Never was such a door made in our day! It was divided horizontally into two leaves, the upper one ornamented with antique wood carvings. A ponderous iron ring served as door knocker; the door itself could only be opened from the inside. The thick stone walls were built on solid rock, and the old moss covered roof was periodically repaired to keep out the rain and snow. Had the old cottage been gifted with the power of speech, it might have told of many interesting events in its long and honorable history. On the right side of the door a gray stone tablet was built into the wall, and on it could still be read the following quaint inscription:

"Anno Domini 1662, Christian Laurentius Bauer, burgomaster of this city, and his beloved wife, Katharine Elizabeth, dedicated this house to be the abode of four virtuous and honorable widows, endowing the same with a sum sufficient for

its maintenance, and for the payment of two silver dollars on the first day of every month to each of the four inmates of this place of refuge. Done in gratitude to God and in aid of the afflicted.

Soli Deo Gloria."

Ever since that year of long ago the little cottage had fulfilled the purpose of its pious founders, in that it had continuously been occupied by four widows—"virtuous and honorable," it is to be hoped. Of these, two lived in rooms fronting on Twilight Lane, and the other two in rooms facing a still darker and narrower alley, on the other side of which towering modern skyscrapers reared their massive walls so close to Bauer Cottage that scarcely more than six feet separated them. The poor old house cowered beneath these colossal structures, as if it feared to be crushed under their weight. As the cottage chimney reached no higher than the second story of the great house across the alley, the thin smoke curling

from its mouth seemed to lose courage, for it swooped aside, or down the chimney again, causing the four "virtuous and honorable" widows to wipe their eyes and clap the lids on their kettles to keep the soot out of their soup.

The widows who were so fortunate as to have rooms facing Twilight Lane were to be congratulated. For during the longest days of summer it often happened that the sun's rays found their way between two and four o'clock in the afternoon to their window sills, where a potted myrtle or geranium stretched forth eager arms to meet the light. From these windows, also, a glorious view was obtained of the bakeshop across the street with its ornamental sign adorned with buns and biscuits in gold and silver; and often would the widows feast their eyes in turn upon the painted symbols and their real counterparts in the shop window, until their mouths watered, and a sigh escaped them,

as they turned their backs upon the tempting sight.

What greatly added to the alluring prospect spread out before the eyes of the fortunate widows in the front rooms was the circumstance that in the basement below the bakeshop was another shop where other eatables were on sale. There were large rolls of butter, golden yellow in summer and of a paler tint in winter, brought in by farmers from the surrounding country. There were also serried ranks of hams and pork loins, and great platters filled with fat herring. A cardboard hanging in the low window bore the welcome announcement: "Fresh eggs for sale within."

As was to be expected, a locality, so replete with the necessities of life, was not without its frequent visitors. Here busy housewives, buxom servant girls, impish errand boys, and weary laborers congregated to make their purchases and to exchange the gossip of the day, or dis-

cuss the latest news in town or from the world at large.

All this the two widows especially favored by fortune could enjoy to their heart's content. It is true that an almost irresistible temptation beset them to allow more than one sixpence to find its way to the bakeshop, and, with the alluring rolls of butter before their eyes, to spread unduly thick layers upon their thin slices of bread.

Were it not for the fact that Bauer Cottage was situated in Twilight Lane, it might be aptly said, therefore, of the inmates in the two front rooms that "where there is much light there are also deep shadows."

On the other hand it must be noted that the two "virtuous and honorable widows" occupying the rear rooms through the munificence of the one-time burgomaster also enjoyed special privileges of their own. It is true, their rooms were so dark that their poor old eyes were unable to bear the

glare of sunlight whenever they on rare occasions issued forth from their dismal retreats in Bauer Cottage. But if they were denied the privilege of looking *out* upon the stir of life around them, the privilege of looking *in* upon the great world was not denied them. From their back windows they could look directly in through the gleaming panes of the great house across the alley. There fine ladies and dapper gentlemen could be seen, and the riches of all the world were spread out before the wondering eyes of the widows. Often the parable of the rich man and Lazarus occurred to them then, and with a sigh they wondered if the angels loved them so much that they might hope one day to be carried away into Abraham's bosom.

One of the widows living in the rear part of the cottage was constantly reminded of the angels by the name she bore; for this was Angel Kruse, although she was commonly called Mother Kruse.

Her place was in the darkest corner of the room between an old oak cupboard and the mantelpiece, above which hung a picture of the three wise men kneeling before the Christ-child in Bethlehem. But this picture could not be seen unless you held a lighted candle close to it.

It mattered little to Mother Kruse, however, whether she lived in a front room or a rear room, or whether she sat in a dark corner or by the window, for she had been stone-blind for several years. The small glimmer of light she had brought with her to Bauer Cottage had gradually flickered out in Twilight Lane; and the poor old woman would have been in a bad way, had she not received a helping hand in her misfortune. For this purpose her niece had been permitted to come and live with her. The latter, who did laundry work, was just now standing by the ironing board, pressing a voluminous ball dress, whose fleecy whiteness struggled to scatter the darkness of the room.

The niece was a woman of thirty, though she looked much older. Her pale, thin face was deeply furrowed—for sorrow and tears hasten the speeding years — and the light in her dark eyes, once bright and flashing, had long since faded. These eyes were no longer suited for the sunshine in the gay world without, but they were well adapted for the gloom of Mother Kruse's rear room, where the high lights of the world never penetrated. Her black hair, heaped about a shapely head, was already sprinkled with gray. When she came to live with her aunt, she had planned to earn her daily bread by doing fine sewing and embroidery work, but the lack of light in Bauer Cottage made this impossible. Now she was doing fine laundry work, and such was her skill that she was never without employment. She realized that her constant stooping over steaming tubs and her ironing board was not good for her health; but what should a poor woman

do? She had her way to make, and there was no other resource.

Was she then a widow? To this question we can answer both yes and no. In reality her lot was worse than that of a widow. For a widow is supported by the thought that an all-wise and loving God has given her this cross to bear, and she bows in humility under her burden. To devout widowhood this is a never failing source of consolation.

But this poor woman had a heavier load to carry. Convicted of a serious crime, her husband was languishing in prison.

This explains why the woman leaning over the ironing board looked much older than she really was, and why a tear now and then fell upon the ball dress she was ironing, only to be hastily evaporated by the application of the hot iron. An iron more burning than the one she was using had long seared her very soul. This also explains why she never appeared on the

streets in the daytime, but waited till evening to fetch from the abodes of the rich and fortunate the costly dresses and laces she washed and ironed, waiting again for darkness to set in before she returned these delicate works of art, and received her hard earned wages. The fine women who with jest and laughter engaged in the giddy whirl of the dance gave no thought to the heartaches, the tears that clung to the airy creations which made them look so charming under the bright lights of the ballroom.

But this poor woman was to experience the truth that though our Father in heaven often lays heavy burdens upon his children, He also helps them to bear them. In the present case the God-sent helpers were two in number—an old woman and a little child. The former sat in the dark corner between the cupboard and the mantel, and her name was Angel Kruse. How could she who to all outward seeming was a burden to others be classed among

the helpers? In addition to the fact that she was blind, she was sadly crippled with rheumatism, so that she could not clothe herself, and often found it quite beyond the power of her palsied hands to lift the food to her mouth. As if this were not enough, an asthmatic cough often threatened to take her breath away.

And yet it was true that this poor creature deserved to be ranked among the helpers! As soon as she opened her old shrunken mouth, she began to be a help to others. In the first place her voice was so mild and gentle, so soft and musical, that it was a pleasure to hear it, and one wondered that it could fall from her poor old shriveled lips. There was sweet harmony between her voice and her name. In God's good time "Angel" Kruse would sing with the angels of heaven to the glory of Christ her Saviour.

But it was not only the quality of her voice that served as a help to others; the words she uttered were as a healing balm

Father and son met at last in the sailors' home.
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to the wounded hearts of those with whom she came in contact.

She had had her full share of the thorns and thistles of the world upon which God had laid His curse. Before her limbs were crippled by rheumatism, her life had been one of toil and hardships; and before her eyes were darkened, they had looked down into many an abyss of sin and misery, as is generally the case with those whom God would foster for His kingdom.

When her battered bark at last found a haven of refuge in Bauer Cottage, she had buried husband, sons, and daughters —all her loved ones in this world. She alone had survived the ravages of time. And now she often crooned to herself the words of an old song:

"On me Thy blessing, Lord, bestow,
To Thee my soul would fly.
O, call me from this world of woe
To mansions in the sky!"

Year in and year out she sat in her dark

corner patiently waiting for death, which was more and more coming to be regarded by her as the greatest of God's blessings.

When such a sanctified personality speaks, the words are as oil and wine in the wounds of travelers who have been plundered and beaten on the world's great highway between Jericho and Jerusalem.

But what about the other helper—the little child? It must be admitted that he was even harder to find than the old woman who sat in the dark corner. Keen eyes were needed to detect him in the dusky twilight reigning within that small rear room.

There, however, under the folding table something was moving, and presently a curly head popped out, and a pair of bright blue eyes were fixed upon the woman at the ironing board, while an eager voice called: "Mama, my bread and butter! It's ten o'clock."

The poor woman had consequently not

only herself to care for, but also a little child.

Poor woman! Say, rather, rich woman. For the fine boy who now crawled from under the table and stood on sturdy legs before her was her own son. He seemed to be a lad of about four, lusty and strong for his years. From his sturdy legs to his curly head he was the perfection of symmetry. His merry bright eyes danced as his white teeth closed upon a huge bite of his bread and butter. The wonder was how such vigorous life could thrive in the gloom of Twilight Lane, and not pine away from lack of fresh air and sunshine.

Three years ago the terrible event occurred that was the immediate cause of bringing the boy and his mother to the gloom of Bauer Cottage. Wolf Hartman, the husband and father, was a reckless and pleasure loving mechanic, who spent much of his leisure time in alehouses and public dance halls. There, one evening, he became involved in a quarrel which ended

in manslaughter. The unhappy man was convicted of the crime, and sentenced to ten years in the penitentiary.

At the time his young wife often wished that their infant child were dead, so that he would not have to live to bear the shame of his father's misdeeds. Even now in her dark moments when she thought of his coming years, her heart grew heavy, and she wondered if it would not be better for her boy to die before he learned to understand the disgrace that rested on the unhappy family. The mother's anxiety was increased when she brooded over the fate of her child in case of her own early death.

But in spite of all this, the little one was a great help to his poor mother. Even now he aided her to bear her burden. He had bright, observant eyes, and knew just what to do when his mother was tired and sad. He had soft, plump arms that could steal about her neck. He had fine, rosy cheeks to press against her pale, thin

face. He also had a warm, tender heart, and his childish prattle was as refreshing to her soul as showers to the thirsty ground. Even in the gloom of Twilight Lane, therefore, the tender plant of hope was able to shoot forth branches that bid fair to bear fruit in days to come.

Having eaten his slice of bread and butter, Connie, diminutive for Conrad, asked for permission to go out a little while. The mother nodded her head and went on with her work.

Out!—But where? He could not go out into the street, for Twilight Lane was always a busy place in the mornings. Only in the late afternoons could he run and play there in front of the house, and cast longing eyes toward the bakeshop across the street. In the mornings there was only the narrow alley in the rear to serve him as a playground.

The heart of a child, however, is easily satisfied. If the rain did not drip from the eaves, or the snow was not too deep,

Connie's alley was a delightful place of amusement. Now that spring was come, the busy swallows flitted across the narrow strip of blue sky between the houses, and the air was cool and balmy. No wonder, then, that Connie's breast expanded, and that he cut as lively capers as a young colt.

Near the back door lay a great pile of sand that proved a veritable paradise to the lad. Here he kneaded the sand into loaves which he baked in an oven dug out of the heap. Here he built houses and laid out stately gardens dotted with sticks and stones to represent trees and shrubbery.

A window in the great house across the alley stared blankly down upon the scene. Whenever Connie came into the alley, he looked up expectantly toward this window. But today no one was in sight. So he threw a handful of sand against the pane, but without the desired result. A second handful and then a third brought

no better results. Connie pouted discontentedly and returned to his play. First he galloped forth and back through the alley several times, and then he flung himself upon the sand pile and soon became deeply engrossed.

Meanwhile a little head had popped up in the window opposite, and a pair of eager eyes looked down on Connie at his play. A large doll with round glassy eyes also seemed eager to see what was going on, and bumped its head against the pane. At the noise Connie hastily looked up. The friendly smile on the faces of both children proved that their acquaintance was of long standing.

However much they would have liked to decrease the distance between them, this was impossible. The boy could not climb the smooth wall of the house, and the girl could not open the window. After a little while an old nurse appeared, shook her head, and lifted the little girl down from the window. But after much plead-

ing the nurse was induced to open the window a few inches, and through the narrow crack a hand was thrust out, dropping into the outstretched hands below various goodies and several picture cards.

Then the happiness of the boy in the sand pile knew no bounds, and his blue eyes sparkled with joy and gratitude. When his little friend in the window disappeared, he ran in to show his mother what he had got, and to recount his experiences. The mother shared his joy, and even the old face in the corner lit up with sympathetic interest.

On one occasion the boy called to the little girl in the window: "What's your name?"

"Annie," she replied; "What's yours?"

"Conrad," was the answer; and from that day Annie and Connie were destined to play important parts, the one in the life of the other. For the seed of the future often germinates in the "twilight" of the past.

CHAPTER 2.

Behind the Great Windows.

When a poor man passes the great houses on the broad avenues of a city, he often casts discontented looks up at the shining windows with their costly silk draperies, behind which of an evening he can catch glimpses of gold and silver ornaments, gleaming mirrors, and glittering chandeliers. Many a time he doubles his fist and grits his teeth with hatred and envy, when by comparison he thinks of the destitution and the bare walls of his own humble home, where poverty stares him starkly in the face.

If he only knew what is often concealed behind the bright windows and their silk draperies! If he knew that the woe and darkness of the human heart cannot be dispelled by sparkling chandeliers, and

that the hunger of the human soul for peace and happiness cannot be appeased by the abundance of a well-appointed table—if he knew all this, the poor man's closed fist would open, and his gritted teeth would part to make room for a sigh of pity.

Nor was it true that peace and happiness reigned even behind the window from which Annie looked down upon the boy in the sand pile. Her father has been a high government officer. But when he strove for even higher honors and another won the coveted position, his wounded pride and ambition preyed upon him, until his reason gave way and he had to be dismissed from active service.

Ever since, the poor man had sat in his study unceasingly turning the pages of his books. He would show the world that he had been wronged. And so he sought and sought in his books for the proofs that he was never able to find. Often it was almost impossible to induce him

to eat or to seek well-needed rest at night.

The wife's apartments were on the opposite side of the great house. Young and delicate she looked, as she reclined on her soft couch. The loss of a beloved husband in this fearful manner had broken her health. Though they lived under the same roof, they were as far apart as the poles. When she visited him now and then, he waved her away with his hand, and did not look up from his books.

One of their two children she had followed to the grave. Then she had been utterly crushed by sorrow. Now hopeless languor had taken possession of her, and intense yearning for rest and peace filled her tired eyes.

Between the apartments of these two lay the nursery, where Annie lived with her old nurse Barbara, whose name Annie's childish lips transformed to Barbie.

These two were inseparable, neither being quite content without the other. In Barbara's eyes Annie was the wonder child

in all the world. To Annie the whole world moved about her beloved Barbie. Since the brother's death Annie was Barbara's sole care. She never saw her father. To her invalid mother she was brought once or twice a day for a few minutes, when she found it hard to observe the quiet and decorum of the sick room.

She did not play with other children, for since her father's misfortune the family led a life of seclusion. When her little brother died, Annie was three years old. Though a year had passed since then, the child had not forgotten the sad event, which, just because of her secluded life, still lingered in her thoughts.

Time and again she would play funeral. The big doll was laid in a cradle to represent her dead brother, and Barbie must take her place at the head and be the preacher, while Annie herself kneeled at the foot just as her mother had done. And then her brother went to heaven. Heaven

was behind the blue curtains enclosing Annie's little bed. There it was glorious to be, so Barbie had told her, and therefore Annie loved to play that she was in heaven with her doll. There they would eat cookies together, her doll and she; and if Barbie stuck her head inside the curtain, Annie would wave her away, declaring that only children came to heaven, not grown folks.

So, one day, when Annie saw the little boy playing in the narrow alley, she began to beg and beg that she might have him for her brother. Barbie found it impossible to quiet her.

Annie's own room faced the street, but the windows of the dining room looked down upon the alley. Before long she knew precisely when the little boy would appear in the alley, and as her will was law to Barbie, she was always at the window to enjoy the pleasures of the sand pile. When Connie galloped up and down the alley, riding on a broomstick, her eyes

glowed with delight, and loud cries escaped her at the stirring scene.

The human heart, alas, is never satisfied. Soon Annie was not content to be a mere spectator, she wanted to join the boy, to take his hand, to enter into his sports, and to show him all her pretty things.

"I want Connie to come and visit us," she now repeatedly demanded.

The mere thought terrified Barbara. She reasoned with Annie, and declared that mama would never consent to it.

"Then Annie wants to go to him!" But that was just as terrible, just as impossible.

But Annie was persistent. No day passed that she did not renew her pleading, and every new glimpse of Connie only increased her longing. She almost drove her old nurse to distraction.

So one day, to quiet Annie, her nurse said: "When Annie's birthday comes, we will visit Connie."

This promise was hailed with delight. She began to count, first the weeks, and then the days. At times she would call to the boy from the window that she would soon come and visit him, which announcement he greeted with a nod and a merry laugh as he bit deeply into his slice of bread and butter. At other times she would gather together all her toys that she planned to take along.

Barbara viewed these preparations with anxiety, but admitted to herself that in some way she must keep her promise, or break the heart of her darling. Consequently she began to make inquiries about the boy and his family connections. When she discovered that his mother did laundry work, she determined to make this an excuse for paying a visit with Annie to Bauer Cottage.

Annie's birthday arrived with its usual quota of presents, which, however, this time failed to interest her greatly. Refreshments were served in mother's room,

but Annie scarcely allowed herself time to partake of them before she reminded Barbara of their walk, nodded a smiling farewell to her mother, and called back to her from the door:

"Today we are going to visit Connie."

They set out loaded with gifts. Annie could not comprehend why they had to walk round the whole block in order to reach the alley, when they might easily have climbed out of the window. She was not afraid to jump, and Barbie's legs were so long that she could step down. The old nurse smilingly listened to Annie's prattle, but grew somewhat alarmed and suspicious when the street sign on the corner announced the name: "Twilight Lane." But Annie tripped along merrily, free from all anxiety, and great was her surprise when Barbara stopped before a queer old door and announced: "Here is where Conrad lives."

The door opened, and a wrinkled old woman received them with much surprise,

for such fine company were rare in Bauer Cottage. When she was asked where Mrs. Hartman lived, a bony finger pointed to an obscure door in the gloomy rear of the house.

This door, too, was opened by none other than Conrad himself. When Annie sighted him, she rushed forward and cried: "Now I'm here, and I've brought you many good and pretty things!"

Then she burst into the room without ceremony, much to the amazement of its inmates. The old woman in the corner listened with interest to the children's prattle, and the younger woman was so confused that she forgot to set out a chair for Barbara.

Annie plunged at once into feverish activity, while Connie stood as if turned to stone. She grasped his hands, he made no objection; she patted his cheeks, he submitted; she smiled happily up into his face, he stood unmoved; she told him that it was her birthday, he failed to congrat-

ulate her; she explained to him how eagerly she had looked forward to this visit, his sober mien remained unchanged.

Then she began to unpack what she had brought with her. Now, at last, the ice was broken. His eyes kindled with interest, and he turned to his mother and solemnly declared: "I like that girl."

With glowing cheeks he turned to examine the treasures spread out before him. Nothing such had ever been seen, or even dreamed of, by him before. Caramels in gaudy wrappers, bonbons, nuts, oranges, apples, cookies—this was magic, this was, indeed, a miracle! The mere sight of Connie's joy filled Annie's cup of happiness to overflowing.

Suddenly Connie darted over to the old woman who sat in the corner with folded hands, as was her custom. He placed an orange in her hand, and said: "That's for you. Doesn't it smell sweet?"

Annie also approached the corner and

gazed wonderingly upon the motionless, wide-open eyes of the blind woman.

"Is she your grandma?" she asked Conrad.

"No," he replied; "she is Auntie Angel. Didn't you know that?"

"Angel!" exclaimed Annie, as if wondering how such an old woman could be an angel.

"Yes, Angel," replied the old woman gently. "But I'm only *called* an angel, while you *are* an angel, whom the good God has sent to us. Come here, child, and let me place my hand upon your head."

The little girl approached obediently and placed her curly head in the old woman's lap. The latter placed her trembling hand upon the child's head and said fervently:

"God bless you, my child; God bless you!"

Then she turned to Conrad, and said: "Now you must also do something for the little girl."

Conrad looked surprised. What in the world could he do for her?

"You can recite your prayers for her," prompted the old woman. "Come here to me."

The boy obeyed, and with folded hands he repeated the following prayer verse:

"Look down upon Thy child alway
With loving contemplation;
And lead me by Thy hand, I pray,
Far from the world's temptation.
My soul, O God, make pure and good
Through Jesus and His precious blood."

"That was my prayer, Connie," said the old woman. "Now say your own." Connie willingly complied:

Though small and weak,
Thee, Lord, I seek,
And many times I long
To see the holy star
O'er Bethlehem from afar,
And hear the angels' song.
O, Morning Star, so wondrous, bright,
Dispel the darkness of the night,

And send Thy radiance down on me,
That Christ, my Saviour, I may see.

This was Connie's gift to Annie. From the great house across the alley the treasures of this world came to him; and in the widow's dark retreat of Bauer Cottage the treasures of heaven came down to little Annie. It was plain to see that she was deeply stirred. Silently she looked from the old woman to the praying lips of the boy, wonder and awe depicted in her face.

Finally she turned with a sigh to Barbara, and asked: "Did you hear that, Barbie? Wasn't it beautiful?"

"Did you understand it?" her old nurse asked.

"Certainly I did. I understood every word," Annie confidently replied.

Now Barbara wanted to take her leave, but Annie would not listen to this. She insisted on visiting Connie's wonderful alley with its sand pile dotted with houses and gardens. Ten minutes were re-

luctantly granted the children for this purpose.

When the children were gone, the two women fell to talking with the result that Mrs. Hartman had soon unburdened her heart to the visitor. Barbara listened, at first with interest, then with genuine sympathy to the sad tale. She endeavored to console the unfortunate woman by suggesting that her husband might have repented, that the time would pass quickly, and that the good God would not forsake her. When Mrs. Hartman said that her husband had never written, the sympathetic Barbara advised her to pay a visit to her husband. This, she was sure, would help her to bear her heavy burden.

During this conversation more than ten minutes had passed, and Barbara hurried out after her little charge. Great was her alarm when she could find no trace of the children. The two women ran from end to end of the alley, anxiously calling and searching. But all search proved in vain;

the two little ones were not to be found. A gate, ordinarily closed but this day open, shut off the alley from the street on which Annie's home stood.

Had the children gone this way? This thought terrified Barbara, but proved to be true. When she burst into the house, she learned that Annie had come some time before in company with a poorly dressed boy, and that the two had gone straight to mama's room.

The two children had not lingered long in the alley, for Annie was seized with a sudden desire to examine from the outside the house behind whose great windows her days were spent. Then she bethought herself how splendid it would be if Connie could live with her always. She therefore proposed that they should go straight to her mama and secure her consent to this plan.

Without further waste of time she grasped her companion's hand and started off to put this plan into execution. With

greatest astonishment Annie's mother saw her daughter enter her room at this unusual hour, leading by the hand a little boy whose jacket was frayed and threadbare.

Conrad stood for some time in silent amazement, regarding the pale lady and her surroundings, while Annie hurried forward and eagerly informed her mother that this was Connie, a nice little boy, whom she wanted as a playmate. Couldn't he stay with her always, so that she wouldn't have to be alone with Barbie? In order to make her plea more effective she ended by saying:

"Just think mama, he can pray, and I can't. Shall he say a prayer for you?"

The invalid did not know what to make of it. The occurrence was unaccountable until by repeated questions she learned that the boy was the son of a washerwoman whom the nurse had visited in company with Annie.

Meanwhile Connie was calmly survey-

ing the grandeur of the strange new world into which he had been thrust. But again and again his eyes returned to the pale lady whose mild, sad face attracted him strongly. She, too, seemed to find pleasure in the boy. Despite his threadbare clothing, the childlike candor of his face and bearing favorably impressed her.

"Is it true," she said, more to herself than to Annie, "that he can really pray, and that you can't?"

"Yes, mama," Annie declared; "he will show you himself that he can pray. Come here, Connie, and let mama hear you pray."

But Connie would not. Either he was too bashful, or he was unwilling to parade his ability to pray—whatever the reason, he silently shook his head.

Just then the door was softly opened, and Barbara appeared, pale from the fright she had had. She truthfully recounted what had taken place, and took the blame and responsibility upon her-

self, well knowing that she would thereby spare her darling Annie. Then she took the boy by the hand to lead him home.

But this was far from according with Annie's wishes. She made violent objections, and by pleadings and pettings she finally persuaded her mama to let Connie stay another half hour, Barbara, meanwhile, being asked to relieve his mother's anxiety by explaining the reason for his absence.

From that day Conrad was a frequent visitor in Annie's home, and he often recited his prayers to the pale lady who had such a slender hold on the thread of life. The touching simplicity of the words moved her, and out of her heart arose an echo of Conrad's prayer:

"O, send Thy radiance down on me,
That Christ, my Saviour, I may see."

CHAPTER 3.

Behind Prison Bars.

There is a dark world set apart from the rest of mankind. Through prison bars the light of the stirring world without penetrates only as a drab, colorless twilight. The light of life is liberty; behind prison bars liberty is at an end. The light of life is happiness; behind prison bars all happiness is lost. The light of life is human fellowship; behind prison bars no cheering fellowship is to be found. Summer or winter, heat or cold—what matters it there? Spring with its verdure and flowers, or autumn with its sleet and snow—it is all one to the unhappy inmates of our penitentiaries and prisons. Their lives are passed in perpetual twilight and gloom.

The prisoners marched away to their

work in a long line under the watchful eye of their guards. No one dared to leave the ranks, no one ventured to exchange a word with his neighbor. However, the soft murmur of a marching tune arose from the ranks, but the song was dull and leaden with hopelessness and despair. The uninitiated could understand no word of the song, but the keepers knew it well, as it had been handed down from countless generations of prisoners:

"O, the world is large, and the sea is
blue!
Bear up, my hearties, bear up!
What's the good of whining? It won't
help you.
If the food is bad, and our cells are
dark,
Bear up, my hearties, lets toe the mark,
Though we languish in darkness and
shadow.
"O, winter has fled, and summer is here!
Bear up, my hearties, bear up!

Hist! Silence your song, for the guard
draws near.
Though heavy our shackles, time passes
apace.
Bear up, my hearties, with courage face
The dark days ahead, and their an-
guish."

It was a sad and terrible song. A look into the pallid faces of the prisoners would reveal the anger, the scorn, the defiance, and the rancor which unrepented sin stamps upon a human countenance, when the heart fails to heed the warning: "Sin is a reproach to any people."

In the last rank walked a broad-shouldered, rugged man, whose sinewy neck was held defiantly erect. The black, disordered hair added a touch of wildness to his appearance. About the closely compressed lips hovered a world of hate and rage, for the present held in restraint by stern prison discipline, but ready to break out at the first opportunity.

This man was convict number 13 of

the fourth men's ward. The name he had borne outside of the prison bars was Wolf Hartman. The prison authorities regarded him as one of the most dangerous prisoners. Therefore he always marched in the last rank, just ahead of a guard. As he had made several attempts to break prison, he was always manacled at night.

How different, now, from the man he had once been! Then he had gone singing to his work in the morning, and returned at night without evidence of fatigue. Gaily he had sat down to his simple meal as to a princely feast. The steaming soup, the thick slices of coarse black bread had disappeared as if by magic at the onslaught of his vigorous appetite. The meal ended, he had kissed his wife, lit his pipe, and engaged in boisterous play with his sturdy little son—a happy husband and father in a happy home!

The wife loved her husband with all her heart. His redundant vitality and un-

failing good humor, his skill as a workman and devotion to his family—all these were the foundations on which she built her life's happiness. But he had one grave fault which was destined to ruin his own life and to destroy the happiness of his loved ones. He was a confirmed sensualist, and worldly pleasure was the lure whose enticing voice he never failed to follow. His Sundays became "sin days", spent in feverish search of the pleasures that never can satisfy the soul.

His wife was powerless to resist his superabundant love of pleasure, or to direct it into safe and saner channels. Only on rare occasions did she venture to oppose her will to his, and remain at home when he sallied forth in search of Sunday and holiday amusements. Then he would go alone, and be wilder and more convivial than usual, as if to make up for the absence of his wife, without whom his joy of life seemed incomplete. Had anyone tried to warn him against this

mode of life, he would have regarded such a canting hypocrite with scornful eyes, and his fingers would have itched to do him violence.

Wolf Hartman's extraordinary capacity for work and his steadily increasing wages placed the family in comfortable circumstances, and made it possible for him to spend a considerable portion of his earnings on amusements.

It never entered his mind to lay aside something for a rainy day. He lived for the day only. When his wife now and then suggested the wisdom of saving, he laughed good-humoredly at her needless anxiety, and rolling up his shirt sleeves, he showed her his brawny arms, declaring that these were his capital and his savings bank.

The Bible pronounces a curse on the man "who maketh flesh his arms, and whose heart departeth from Jehovah." The day came when this curse fell heavily on Wolf Hartman.

One Sunday evening he attended a ball in a public dance hall, where wine and music incited the hearts and passions of men and women alike. In the midst of the carousal a stranger in the place insulted a young girl whose brother was a friend of Hartman's. A bloody fight occurred. When the police arrived, the stranger lay dead from a knife wound, and Hartman stood over him with burning eyes and clenched hands. The others had made their escape. Hartman despised the use of a knife as the weapon of a weakling; but all his protestations of innocence were in vain, especially after an officer found the murdered man's watch in his pocket.

Hartman maintained his innocence. He had only aided his friend in punishing a rascal, and his fists were his only weapons. But the chain of circumstantial evidence was too strong. Manslaughter and robbery was the verdict of the court,

and ten years in the penitentiary the punishment inflicted.

Ten years in the penitentiary! What of his darling wife What of his splendid boy, his Conrad? Who would care for them? When a deputy sheriff informed him that his wife and son desired to bid him farewell, he cried aloud that it would break his heart to see them. Let him be taken away at once to begin his ten years of confinement, and to die before his time was up!

Two years had passed since then. Two endless years of seemingly endless days! Hatred and fury had eaten their way ever deeper into the poor man's soul. Justice, human or divine—there was no such thing! The guilty ones were laughing at him now, and living lives of pleasure, unhampered by the alleged justice of human law. And the righteousness of God—the prison chaplain had prated about it; but if there was such a thing as divine justice, then, surely, the guilty and not the

innocent would be languishing behind prison bars.

His faithful wife had written to him, but her letters had only embittered him, for she blamed herself and her own lack of firmness as the cause of the misfortune that had befallen them. "Sin is a reproach to any people," she had written; but when he read these words, he tore to pieces her letter and stamped on it, and never replied.

But he would have his revenge one day. The very thought of it gave him strength and courage to endure the torture and disgrace of prison life. And so he muttered tunelessly the refrain of the prison song:

"Bear up, my hearties, with courage face
The dark days ahead, and their anguish."

During the anguish of those dark days he constantly brooded on plans to revenge himself upon the social order that had

dealt with him so unjustly. In these plans there entered the purpose of acquiring wealth by fair means or foul, and then of betaking himself across the seas, there to make up to the full the loss of ten years of freedom by riotous living.

Such were the plans that seethed in his mind from morning till night, such were his dreams as he tossed upon the hard prison cot in his dark cell by night. All his attempts to break prison had failed, but he still hoped against hope that his next attempt would be successful.

Meanwhile, his wife in the dark rear room of Bauer Cottage continued to support herself and child by constant toil, while stealthy tears dropped down upon the white fabrics she was ironing. With untiring patience she cared for the blind old woman sitting in the dark corner by the cupboard, and her only source of comfort was Conrad, her boy, whose vigorous health, bright eyes, and rosy cheeks did much to make her life more endurable.

But her thoughts never ceased to dwell lovingly, yearningly upon her husband. How she longed to be folded in his strong embrace, to feel the protection of his rugged manhood, and to implore him to begin with her a new and better life! O, that she might see him and talk to him again; or failing this, O, that he would write to her! Nothing remained to her now but the painful memory of a lost happiness and the crushing consciousness of her own share in her husband's guilt.

Barbara's advice that she should visit her husband sent a ray of light and hope into her dark heart, and the thought of it gave her no rest. But how was such a plan to be realized? The cost of the journey and the loss of wages for the time spent seemed insurmountable difficulties in her way. Nevertheless she began to lay aside a little money week by week, stinting herself but not her son for this purpose. When Conrad and her aunt had retired for the night, she would

count her savings and calculate how long it would take her to put aside the required amount. She wondered what her reception would be. She must, of course, take Conrad along, for there was no one in whose charge she could leave him; and besides, his father would want to see how large and fine he was, and the boy needed to meet his father, so that he would know him when the ten years were up. As yet, Conrad was too young to realize the stigma attached to his father's name.

When the needed sum was finally attained, she told her old aunt of her plans, and asked her advice. Angel Kruse, upon hearing this, stretched out her withered hands as if in benediction, and joyfully exclaimed:

"Go with God, my daughter, and follaw where He leads. Go and seek up your lost prodigal, and tell him that 'there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine righteous persons, who need no repent-

ance.' Go and give him that message from me and from a loving Saviour."

Then she brought forth from a hiding place in her corner three silver dollars, which she was saving for her own funeral shroud. But the contemplated journey was to her of greater importance; so she gave her savings gladly and she insisted that Conrad should go along, so that he might say a prayer for his father. As for herself, she would manage to get along while they were gone, and she would pray that God might send His holy angels to protect them.

As Mrs. Hartman listened to the dear old woman, she felt that she was in the presence of a saint of God, and she fell to her knees beside her. Angel Kruse placed her hand on the younger woman's head and whispered:

"Jehovah will keep thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth and for evermore."

With this blessing, mother and son

started off for the city where the state prison was located. Barbara had advised Mrs. Hartman to seek an interview with the prison superintendent. This she promptly did. An elderly man with sharp, penetrating eyes received her in his office. He measured her with his eyes from head to foot; and after she had timidly presented her request, he said that it would be difficult to grant the same. In case of well-behaved prisoners, such a request was readily granted, but her husband had made several attempts to break prison, and therefore deserved no favors. But after a moment's hesitation he said that he would make an exception in her case, and in his presence grant an interview between her husband and herself. So he commanded that convict number 13 should be brought in.

The next few moments of waiting seemed an eternity to Mrs. Hartman. Conrad, however, was all eyes for the uniformed man sitting at the desk. As they

approached the prison, the boy had asked his mother who owned this large house, and she had replied that the king did. Now he pulled his mother's skirt and asked in a whisper if the man in uniform was the king.

The door flew open, and with hesitating steps the convict Wolf Hartman entered the room. His first glance sought his wife and child. A subdued groan escaped him. His head sank to his breast, and he turned his back upon them. With a cry of anguish the wife snatched up her boy and threw herself at the feet of her husband.

"Wolf," she moaned, "is it you? Is it really you? Have you no word for Connie and me?"

She could say no more, but grasped his hand and pressed it to her lips and to her streaming eyes.

The strong man trembled in every limb, his face grew deathly pale and was dis-

torted with anguish; but not a word escaped his lips.

The superintendent, meanwhile, sat silently watching the pathetic group near the door, his piercing eyes observing every move. Conrad began to take alarm. He could not understand the meaning of it all, but he felt that he must endeavor to relieve the trying situation somehow; so he turned to his father and said:

"Auntie Angel told me to say a prayer for you."

Without waiting for reply he folded his hands and prayed:

"O, Morning Star, so wondrous, bright,
Dispel the darkness of the night,
And send Thy radiance down on me,
That Christ, my Saviour, I may see."

At these words a sudden dimness affected the glasses of the superintendent, and he found it necessary to polish them with his handkerchief.

Wolf Hartman lifted the boy into his arms, and sent a deep, lingering look into

his bright, blue eyes. At once Connie became confidential, and stroking the close-cropped hair of his father, he asked:

"Papa, why is your hair so short?"

Hastily dropping the boy to the floor, the father groaned: "O, I wish that I were dead!"

The wife, somewhat composed now, began to tell her husband how she and the boy had fared, and how comparatively comfortable they were in Bauer Cottage; and she begged him not to worry over them, for they would get along all right until he was released.

Looking sadly into the thin, worn features of his wife, he moaned: "I am afraid that you will never live to see that day, Anna. What will then become of our boy?"

The words were cruel, but even the wife realized how true they might be, and the thought struck terror to her heart. Then leaning forward and looking into her

eyes as if he would read her very soul, he whispered:

"Do you really believe that I am guilty?"

The poor, distracted wife trembled all over. What could she say? In silence she let the question go unanswered.

Meanwhile Conrad was walking around his father, and examining him from all sides. Then he stooped down and touched his father's foot, inquiring: "Papa, why do you wear that chain around your foot?"

The father made a violent gesture, as if he would hurl the boy far away from him. But just then the superintendent looked at his watch, gave a sign to the guard, and convict number 13 was led from the room.

The superintendent permitted the poor wife to cry out her grief for a while; then he started to converse with her. She gave him a full account of her married life together with her husband; but of the aw-

ful tragedy that had broken up their home she could say nothing, as she had not been present when it occurred. One thing, however, she knew with certainty, and that was that her husband never carried a knife when they went to places of amusement together.

After this conversation the superintendent reviewed the commitment papers in the case of Wolf Hartman, and thereupon again summoned him into his office. But now he was so hard and defiant that nothing could be done with him. Within himself the superintendent thought that if it was wrong to commit Wolf Hartman, it was certainly right to keep him under restraint now; for if he were set at liberty, he would become a menace to society.

Mother and son returned that same day to their humble home in Twilight Lane; and after she had put Connie to bed, she gave her old aunt a full account of her visit to the prison. Many tears flowed as she told her sad story. No comfort had

she given her husband, and her own heart was heavier than before.

When the story was ended the old woman sat for some time lost in thought. Finally she said consolingly: "Don't take it so hard, my child. Hold fast to the assurance that God doeth all things well. If not on earth, then in heaven at last we will come to see the love and wisdom of God's dealings with us."

As a result of this visit convict number 13 was a changed man. No longer was his mind exclusively occupied with plans for revenge or escape. He had once heard the words, "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched," quoted in a sermon. At the time he scoffed at the possibility of this; but now his own boy's remarks about his close-cropped hair and the chain around his foot made him feel that even in this life there are gnawing worms and scorching fires to torture the soul. In pondering on the possibility of the righteous judgment of God, he for-

got for the moment the actual injustice of men toward him. And so he gradually began to

"with courage face
The dark days ahead, and their anguish."

CHAPTER 4.

"I Will Not Leave You Disconsolate."

It was the season of Epiphany. Stern winter held all nature in its icy grip. The stars appeared so large and near that they seemed ready to fall down to earth, and one wondered which one of them it was that led the three Wise Men of the East to the manger in Bethlehem. Down through the ages men have sought to read the stars, but only in the light of divine revelation has their message been revealed and interpreted.

Under the glittering wintry sky of this Epiphany season Bauer cottage still reared its humble roof as it had done for centuries past. Dark and silent it stood in Twilight Lane, as if deserted. The old women who dwelt there had long since sought the shelter of their warm beds

against the winter's cold. Only in one of the rear windows could a dim light be seen, and this light shone down upon a deathbed.

The burden of life had grown too heavy for Connie's mother, and now she lay crushed under its weight. For ten long and weary years she had struggled heroically under her load of sorrow, but now her strength was gone.

The day of her husband's release from prison was fast approaching, and she had used all her strength of mind and body to live to see the consummation of that day. But now the end was come before the goal was reached. Sadly she recalled her husband's words: "I am afraid that you will never live to see that day."

There she lay now, the woman once so active, but now so weak that she could hardly fold her hands in prayer—for the last time. How often she had wrung those hands in anguish! Her large eyes were wonderfully bright and luminous

with all the power of life and love. These eyes were now fixed tenderly upon a youth who was bending over her bed.

The youth was tall and slender of build, and as yet scarcely more than a boy. His right hand was passed under his mother's drooping shoulders, and his left hand gently stroked her pallid brow and soft, gray hair. His blue eyes, usually so full of the joy of living, were now brimming over with tears that fell unnoticed upon the mother's folded hands. His bushy hair had fallen over his forehead; and as his hands were occupied, he could not brush it back.

Time and nature had made a strapping youth of the little lad who once had ridden hobbyhorse and played in the sandpile in the alley behind Bauer Cottage. Plain but wholesome food had made his body strong and his cheeks rosy with health. It was hard to realize that one so vigorous and full of vitality had grown up in the gloom of Twilight Lane.

He had known for years now the tragic fate of his father—his mother had unburdened her heart to him. At first, the truth had cast a gloom over his young life, and he had brooded much over the disgrace that clouded the happiness of those he loved. But by degrees the conviction was strengthened within him that herein lay the first great purpose of his life. Dimly, as from afar, his father's image loomed before him. His look of defiance, his unbroken strength in spite of imprisonment and chains were indelibly impressed upon the boy's mind. And yet he loved this father with an affection implanted by a mother's undying love. His guilt or innocence no longer concerned the son. Years of confinement had atoned for all.

The long years of sorrow had bound mother and son together by stronger bonds than years of peace and happiness could have done. And now death stood

at the door to break these tender ties. O, the pain, the anguish of this hour!

Blind old Mother Kruse still sat in her dark corner. She was over eighty years of age, and was still patiently waiting for death as the greatest blessing that could befall her. Conrad wanted to undress her and put her to bed, something he had been accustomed to do ever since his mother's strength began to fail her. His strong young arms could lift and carry the frail old woman with little or no effort. But this night she did not wish to be put to bed. She knew what was imminent, and leaning forward, she listened intently for every deep breath, every sigh, and every little word that escaped from the dying woman's lips.

She gave no thought to what would become of her when her niece had passed away; all her thoughts centered about the deathbed near her. To her, death was the most sacred moment of life, a divine miracle in which God's power and love

were manifested; and in its presence her heart was lifted up in worshipful prayer.

The world about her was wrapped in darkness, but her inner world was bright and clear. There in this inner world she could see the open heaven and the angels of God ascending and descending, and in the very portals she beheld her Saviour saying as to Jacob of old: "I am with thee, and will keep the whithersoever thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land;" and with Jacob her soul responded: "This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

A faint whisper issued from the lips of Conrad's mother: "Your father, your father," and her eyes were eloquent with words unsaid. Well did Conrad grasp their meaning. There was no need of words between them. He knew without words the deepest desire of his mother's heart with reference to the husband and father both loved so well.

What should the son do to ease the

breaking heart of his mother? Silently he stooped and kissed the cold, pale brow. Again her lips moved, again her eyes looked deeply into the eyes of her son, as she breathed: "Your father—you must—help—him."

"I will not leave you desolate: I come unto you." The words came clearly and soothingly from the dark corner where Angel Kruse was sitting. She spoke slowly and distinctly, and the words came as a cheering message from the unseen world. Three times she repeated the words. The first time, the dying woman listened to the words as Hagar must have listened to the sound of running water to quench the thirst of her dying son in the wilderness. The second time the words were uttered, a look of infinite contentment overspread her countenance, as if she herself had drunk deeply of the water of life. When the words reached her the third time, she opened her eyes with a look of glad surprise; then her head sank back

upon the pillow and she fell asleep to wake no more on earth.

Conrad's arm was still around her, and his hand was still gently stroking his mother's brow, when the blind old woman, who sensed the change that had occurred, fervently exclaimed: "God be praised!"

Then, first, the poor boy realized that his dear mother's heart had ceased to beat. He sank to the floor, buried his face in the pillows, and wept bitterly.

High in the heavens the wintry stars gleamed and twinkled, and just above Bauer Cottage the three bright stars of Orion extended their silvery belt. From within the cottage a bereaved young heart repeated again and again the prayer of childhood:

"O, Morning Star, so wondrous, bright,
Dispel the darkness of the night,
And send Thy radiance down on me,
That Christ, my Saviour, I may see."

* * *

The coming Palm Sunday Conrad would be confirmed, and then go out to sea as a sailor. His mother had not readily consented to this, but had finally yielded to his wishes.

But what would become of poor old Auntie Angel? Who would take pity on her in her helpless state? One of the other inmates of Bauer Cottage had, it is true, promised to care for her; but the promise had been grudgingly given, and therefore little real care was to be expected.

This anxiety weighed heavily on Conrad's heart as he returned alone from his mother's grave after the funeral. The shades of evening were already falling. Dark, too, was Twilight Lane, dark his own sad heart, and dark the empty home to which he was returning—almost as dark as the grave wherein his mother's weary body rested.

When he entered the room, the old woman called him to come and sit on a stool at her feet, as he had often done be-

fore. She laid her hand tenderly on his head, and spoke words of cheer and hope, as only one versed in the ways of God's dealing with His children can speak. Old heart communed with young heart, until the latter drew from the ripe experience of the former lessons that would stand him in good stead in the struggles and dangers that confronted him, as he made his way through the world's darkness to the mansions of light in his Father's house above.

Calmly and confidently Angel Kruse spoke of life and death, of birth and burial, of the perishable treasures and pleasures of this life, of love, human and divine, and especially of his dear mother's love. She had gone to her reward. After a life of hardship and sorrow, eternal rest and peace was now her portion.

Of all this the blind old woman spoke with the simplicity and assurance of a child. But of herself she said never a word. Not a word of her loneliness fell

from her lips, nor of her helpless state when her dear Conrad would be with her no more. And as she spoke, strange feelings stirred in Conrad's heart. One burden after another fell from his young shoulders, until with the venturesome daring of a fledgling bird he was ready to launch out into life with high purpose and noble resolve.

The room had grown totally dark. Only a faint gleam indicated the position of the window. Auntie Angel had lapsed into silence.

At last Conrad broke the silence by asking: "What will become of you, Auntie Angel, when I am gone?"

She answered by repeating the divine promise she had given to Conrad's mother in her dying moment: "I will not leave you desolate: I come unto you."

Then she added: "Now you must light the lamp."

The weeks passed quickly. Palm Sunday came, and with it Conrad's confirma-

tion. Immediately after Easter Conrad would set out for the port to go on board his ship. But before doing so he would again visit the state prison. His mother had told him many times that April sixth was the date of his father's release. How often they had planned together to be at the prison gate on that day to receive him with open arms and bring him home! Now this task was left to him alone, and he would carry it out as they had planned.

The sixth of April came on Wednesday after Easter. On Tuesday Conrad planned to set out. Easter Monday would be his last day in the dark and narrow quarters of his childhood's home. Though the wide world beckoned him to put his fortune to the test within her limitless expanse, yet a thousand ties of love bound him to his humble home in Twilight Lane.

As he helped Auntie Angel to bed for the last time, his heart was filled with sadness at the thought of other less loving hands that would render this service

hereafter. She, however, had no misgivings. Clasping Conrad's hand within her own, she called down on him the blessings of Almighty God. She prayed that light from above might guide him in all his ways; prayed that power from above might make him strong to fight life's battles; prayed, too, that even in distant lands he might remain a loyal son of the Father's house above.

Then she sank back upon her pillow. For herself she had but one prayer to make: "Yea: I come quickly. Amen: come, Lord Jesus."

When Conrad approached her bed the next morning, she lay with folded hands, and a smile of infinite contentment and peace hovered about her lips. Her prayer had been heard at last; Jesus had come, and she had found rest.

Long had been her years of waiting; but, as always, God's good time proved to be the best time for her.

* * *

A youth was standing before the main entrance of the state prison. He carried a bundle under his arm and was dressed as a sailor with a colored handkerchief knotted loosely around his neck. He stood there for an hour patiently waiting for the clock in the prison tower to strike twelve.

At the stroke of the hour a uniformed man with gold braid on collar and cap appeared. He seemed to be in a hurry, but slackened his pace when he saw the young sailor lad snatch off his cap and take a step forward as if to address him.

"What do you want, my lad? Are you waiting for some one?" inquired the official.

"My father was to be released today after ten years of confinement, and I am here to receive him. His name is Wolf Hartman, and I am his son Conrad."

The superintendent brushed his hand across his forehead, and seemed to be trying to recall an incident of the past.

"Weren't you here some eight or nine years ago together with your mother," he inquired.

Conrad nodded assent. This must be the gentleman whom he had supposed to be the king on his former visit with his mother.

"And now you are here to welcome your father, are you?" asked the official with a look of such kindly interest that it warmed Conrad's heart. "Poor lad, you came too late. Your father was released yesterday, and I am afraid it will be hard for you to find him. Those who are released from this place usually lose themselves in foreign parts of the world. But come along, my lad, and I will tell you about your father."

Conrad's disappointment was boundless, tears sprang to his eyes, he stood there as if turned to stone, and his sailor cap fell unnoticed to the ground.

"Where are you bound for now, my lad?" inquired the superintendent.

"I had intended to persuade my father to follow me out to sea in the same ship," replied Conrad sadly. "I thought that would be better for him than to remain on land. But now I won't be able to find him, for I must hurry off, as my train leaves in an hour."

The superintendent looked at his watch and said: "I'll follow you a piece of the way. Your performance of a filial duty shall not be entirely without its reward."

As they walked along together, Conrad learned that his father was greatly changed after the visit of his wife and son. His former defiant attitude had given place to one of deep melancholy. He promptly performed the duties assigned him; but he rarely uttered a word, and a smile never softened his stern features. The superintendent had asked him what he intended to do when he was released, but to this no answer had been given. When asked if he would not seek up his

wife and son, he silently shook his head and hid his face in his hands.

Conrad's face had darkened more and more, as he listened to the superintendent's story. When they reached the railway station, the latter laid his hands on the boy's shoulders, and looking him steadily in the eye, he said kindly:

"God be with you, my lad. Remember that nothing happens by chance. If God so wills it, you will find your father, however wide apart your ways may lead you. And if you find him, try to convince him of the truth that there is a love that never faileth."

Five minutes later the train puffed noisily on its way north. In a fourth class compartment sat a sailor lad with bowed head pondering on the mysteries of life, while his soul fluttered as a dove over a turbulent sea, anxiously seeking a place to rest its weary wings. Such a place rose over the troubled water when Conrad

recalled the divine promise that Auntie Angel had quoted:

"I will not leave you desolate: I come unto you."

So immersed was he in reviewing the memories of former days, that he failed to note the rude laughter and talk of those about him, or the rattle and bang of the train, as it whizzed past small wayside stations. Huddled in a corner and with hands before his face, he seemed to be asleep.

He saw himself again as a little boy playing in the dark alley behind Bauer Cottage, where Annie had come to him from the great house with shining windows to join in his play and to cheer and brighten his days. One whole year their intimacy had lasted; then Annie's frail mother died, and her feeble-minded father was taken away. Annie herself disappeared after having taken a tender and tearful farewell of her little friend with the promise that she would write to him.

This promise she had kept, and her letter was now preserved in the New Testament stowed away in the bundle beside Conrad on the train. He knew it by heart, and to cheer himelf he now repeated its contents under his breath:

"MY DEAR FRIEND:—

I don't like it here at all. My uncle and aunt wouldn't keep me, because they are old and have no children of their own. I am now living with strangers, but I do not feel at home, because I can see that they don't care for me. I am going to school now, and am learning a great many things. Barbie isn't with me any more. We both cried a great deal when we had to part. When I grow sad, I think of how much you used to care for me; and I want to tell you that I still care for you, and that I pray God to arrange matters so that we can play together again. Write to me soon, and don't forget your

ANNIE."

However, it was impossible for Conrad to write, as no address had been given. This was the first and the last letter he received from her.

Although, boy-like, Conrad afterwards made many friends, he never forgot his little friend Annie, and in his heart he nourished the fond hope of meeting her again. By this time he was fully aware of the difference in their station in life, but he hoped by diligence and hard work to remove this barrier between them. Sitting there in the train, he could still feel the thrill of Auntie Angel's hand resting on his head, and of the blessing she had called down on him from heaven. Something told him that this would prove an influence for good in his life.

His greatest sorrow was the thought of his father. How he had rejoiced at the thought of meeting his father! Why had he come too late? With the exception of Annie, no one in all the world cared for him now. Nor was there anyone to whom

he could turn for advice that would help him to find his father. He looked about upon his fellow passengers. There were market women and hucksters, street musicians and apprentices—all chattering and laughing noisily without even noticing the sailor lad huddled in his corner.

The only one to whom Conrad felt at all drawn was a small gray-haired man with a brown, wrinkled face. He sat on a chest in the corner opposite to Conrad, and was industriously puffing away at a short meerschaum pipe. This old man was paying no attention to the noisy crowd in the compartment. Conrad noticed, however, that he shot a sharp glance now and then from under his bushy eyebrows toward the corner where the sailor lad was sitting. He felt that the old man wanted to say something, but found it difficult to break the ice between them.

Suddenly a bright silver dollar rolled across the floor to Conrad's feet. He had noticed that the old man was counting his

money, and rightly supposed that he had dropped the coin. Therefore Conrad picked it up and crossed over to hand it to the stranger. The latter took the coin with a nod of thanks, and motioned to the lad to sit down beside him. Conrad obeyed. For a while the old man sat silent and glum, as if he were at outs with all the world. Finally he muttered with a side-long glance at Conrad:

"Bound for the seaport, I suppose? Look out for the water rats. Take in at my place on the dock. I am old Tom Miller. You had better come right along with me before the others lay their paws on you."

Conrad felt instinctively that there was a sound kernel beneath the hard shell of the old man, and he was attracted to him at once. The poor boy was so artless that his heart was like an open book. The old man did not need to ask many questions before he had a full account of Conrad's life history and a clear understanding of his present state. He manifested no sign

of sympathy, but in his heart he thought: "This is a case which my old woman at home will take delight in handling."

Old Tom Miller was an excellent man, but still better was his old wife, whom the sailors called Mother Lena. Hundreds of seamen frequented their sailor's home on the dock; and the buxom old woman knew them all by name, and with unerring accuracy treated them kindly or harshly, as they deserved. They were all her children, and she exercised maternal authority over them—even going to the length of washing their faces when necessary. More than once it had happened that she had taken some unruly sailor by the neck and thrown him out of doors. Ordinarily, however, she was always ready to aid her boys by word and deed, and to extricate them when they were in trouble.

When Tom Miller entered the large living room of the sailors' home that evening together with Conrad, they found it quite

empty. Mother Lena rose to meet them with a smile of welcome, and she cried cheerily:

"What a fine young lad you have brought me, Tom! I'll fit him out good and proper, you may be sure."

The plump mistress of the sailors' home took a maternal interest especially in the youths who were to set foot for the first time on a ship's deck; and if they were merry, upstanding lads, she cared for them as if they were her own flesh and blood. Ever since her own son Jack had fallen overboard and been lost on his first voyage, she had transferred her mother love to all young men who were going to sea for the first time. When Conrad, therefore, greeted her with a look of frank regard, and bore without wincing the mighty pressure of her fingers as they shook hands, her whole face shone with delight, and they were soon sitting side by side on a bench conversing freely.

Conrad had to unpack his bundle for

her inspection, and with the eye of an expert she examined every shirt and every stocking. When she discovered Conrad's New Testament, she turned it over in her hands and nodded contentedly, but said no word. Her long experience had taught her that those sailor lads who had a New Testament in their pack came from good homes and were to be trusted.

It was indeed providential that Conrad fell into the hands of Mother Lena, for from that day her plump, efficient hands were extended protectingly over him, and whenever he returned from his voyages, he knew where to turn for a welcome and a home.

Thus Conrad spent three comparatively happy days in old Tom Miller's place, coddled by Mother Lena, who not only fed him to repletion, but also hunted up from her ample store many serviceable seamen's togs that found their way to Conrad's pack, materially increasing its bulk.

When he related to her the sad story of his life, tears of sympathy streamed down her fat cheeks. In her heart the determination arose that she would do all in her power to restore father and son to one another. The father especially would benefit by this. But how was she to bring this about? She based her hope of success on the fact that thousands of unfortunates passed through the great seaport every year, and of these, hundreds found their way to Tom Miller's well known sailor's home on the dock.

Having come so far in her reflections, she turned to Conrad and asked: "How did your father look, my lad? Can you describe him to me?"

Without replying in words Conrad took from his breast pocket a carefully wrapped but poorly executed photograph of his mother and father, taken when they were married. Mother Lena wiped her glasses, went to the window, and stood there for some time examining the picture.

When she handed it back to Conrad, she remarked:

"Your father is a handsome man, and he has a face not easily forgotten. But you are more like your mother."

When three more days had passed, the ship on which Tom Miller had secured a place for Conrad as apprentice seaman sailed out of port. It was a well-built brig, whose next port was in England. Followed by many well-wishes, Conrad stood on its deck, his heart throbbing with hope and courage. Over him seemed to hover the divine promise: "I will not leave you desolate: I come unto you."

CHAPTER 5.

A Soul in Darkness.

Humanly speaking, it seemed unfortunate that Wolf Hartman was released from prison before his son's arrival, but not so in the eyes of God. He had decreed that the unhappy man should a day earlier than his son take the same train for the same destination, sitting in the same corner and staring moodily before him. The ten years of confinement had not passed by without leaving their impress upon him. The wild defiance and the bitter thoughts of revenge were gone. The steadfast love of wife and son, as revealed in their visit, had become a power for good in his life.

He had, it is true, rebelled against this power at first. For when the prison superintendent had again tried to reason

with him, his unruly nature had flared up to white heat, and he had laughed him derisively in the face. But with that outburst of rage his defiance was broken, as a sick person is left exhausted after the delirium of fever has abated.

His tortured mind had lost its elasticity. If his mind reverted to the past, he thought of it as something beyond repair. What was done could not be undone. The fact that he was neither a thief nor a murderer was discounted by the voice of conscience telling him that to all intents and purposes he was a murderer at heart. If he thought of the golden liberty he had enjoyed, of his happiness in the love of his wife and son, the very thought almost drove him mad. And the future—how dark and hopeless it seemed! What could he make of it? The shame and disgrace would cling to him through life. Mistrust and contempt would follow him wherever he went. His prison mates were still singing:

"Bear up, my hearties, with courage face
The dark days ahead, and their anguish."

But this song no longer had power to cheer him. Should he go back to wife and child? Never! His shame would set its mark on them. And even if he took them among strangers in foreign lands, how could he endure the unspoken reproach in their eyes; how could he bear the thought that his own son might some day feel that he could not bear his father's name with honor?

Therefore, also, he could not bring himself to write to them. Time and again he had tried to do so, but the pen had always fallen from his fingers upon the blank page.

But what of the spiritual consolation of the Word of God? This had been freely offered him; but his heart was like damp tinder, the divine spark could not ignite it. He listened to its divine promises and

instruction without contradiction or opposition, but his dazed heart seemed incapable of opening to its healing balm.

So the years had dragged on their weary lengths, each marking his features with ever deeper furrows. His hair had turned gray, and his defiant chin was lowered to his breast. He often wondered how it was possible for him to live, and he would have welcomed death as a deliverance.

But his powers of mind and body were unimpaired, the muscles in his arms were like steel, and he had never known a day of sickness.

What were his feelings now that the prison gates were opened, and he was again his own master to come and go as he pleased? It is true that his breast expanded when he drew in the first deep breaths of perfect freedom, but his head again sank to his breast as with lagging steps he went upon his lonely way.

Thought of his wife and son only tend-

ed to deepen his gloom, for he had received word of the former's death, and as for his boy, he had no hope of finding him now. And better so. He would go his own way alone; no man need know where he went. Far beyond the seas in a distant land he would seek to forget the past. But how should he get there? He had, it is true, earned a little money by working overtime in prison; but this was not enough, so he determined to go to the great seaport and work there as a longshoreman until he had earned enough for his passage across the sea.

But on the very day that he arrived at the seaport he learned that a ship sailing next day was in need of stokers. He applied for the position, which was grudgingly given him when the captain learned that he was a liberated convict. His former spirit of defiance rose in arms at the thought that he should receive as an act of mercy a task that would keep him confined amid the smoke and grime of a ves-

sel's boiler room. Bright prospects, indeed, to one who was enjoying the first sweet breath of liberty!

But after all, what did it matter? Anything would do as a means of escape.

There he stood now before one of the huge boilers. No daylight penetrated to the boiler room. When the iron doors were opened to shovel in the coal, a red glow fell upon the sooty and sweaty stokers—that was the only light afforded them. The heat often became so unbearable that they must climb up on deck to get a breath of fresh air, wipe their grimy faces, and look out upon the wide expanse of sea, now bathed in glorious sunlight, again tossing its turbulent waves to the sky. But this relaxation lasted only a few moments. Presently they must again dive down into the dark bowels of the ship to feed the boilers, whose fires must be kept roaring day and night.

Such a life was not easy, and yet it appealed strongly to the darkened soul of

Wolf Hartman. No one disturbed him here in his silent broodings over the past. The glowing fires that he had to feed were a symbol of the fires that had for years burned within him, and that he feared would never be quenched.

Now and then he would stand on deck and gaze upon the motley crowd of passengers before him; the rich stretched out upon their plush-covered lounges in the elegant saloons, or promenading the decks in their silks and satins; the poor, huddled together on the lower decks, pale, haggard, and poorly nourished, but with eyes turned hopefully to the golden land of promise across the waters. The sight brought a smile of derision to his sooty face, for he despised the rich just as much as the poor, and he felt himself superior to both, because wealth and poverty were alike indifferent to him.

His original intention was only to work his passage over to America. But when he observed the stir and bustle, the noise

and uproar of the seething Metropolis, where the individual was lost as a drop of water in the sea, his mind and heart revolted, and the stokers' hole in the bowels of the ship seemed to him a veritable place of refuge. So it came about that when the return trip was begun Wolf Hartman was again shoveling coal into the hungry maws of the boilers.

On a fine summer evening Mother Lena stood leaning against the doorpost of her sailors' home, industriously knitting a stocking and enjoying the evening breeze. The year round, she never saw a green tree, her trees were the myriads of masts in the harbor. No flowers wafted their fragrance about her; instead, the air was laden with the smells of pitch and oily waste. Nevertheless, when she found time to loiter about her door or gossip with her neighbor, she thought that summer was the best season of the year.

Strange to say, the sailors' home was entirely empty on this day, and Mother

Lena had just called over to her neighbor that it would be fine to get to bed early for once, when a man came around the corner of the house. Her long experience taught her that here was a prospective guest. And so it proved. He stopped before the sign representing a perfect forest of ships' masts with two sailors in the foreground. In large white letters could be seen the inscription: "Sailors' Home." With a curt nod to Mother Lena the man stepped in and ordered a meal.

With lagging steps the buxom landlady went around lighting the gas that now shed its dim light on the bowed head of the stranger sitting at a long table against the wall. She sighed with disappointment at the thought of the inroads upon her night's rest the necessity of serving him would make. As he was a stranger to her, and as she considered it her duty to all strangers to ask: "Where from?" and "Whither bound?" she now endeavored to enter into conversation with her guest.

"It's a fine evening, isn't it?"

No answer.

"It's been pretty warm today though, hasn't it?"

No answer.

"You arrived on the trans-atlantic liner yesterday, didn't you?"

Still no answer.

This proved too great a strain on her good nature. Three well-meant questions, and no answer! Her ire was aroused, and when this happened, she was not to be taken lightly.

"Is the man deaf?" she muttered to herself, wiping her glasses and adjusting them on her broad nose. "How does a man look, I wonder, who is not polite enough to answer when he is spoken to?"

Looking through her glasses, she beheld a large, broad-shouldered man with arms and fists that were almost awe-inspiring. He had a well-shaped head with thick gray hair, and across the forehead a deep scar. Strange! Where had she

seen this man before? His face, his Roman nose, his sunken eyes — all seemed familiar to her. She must have some light on the matter. Again she ventured to ask a question.

"Is this the first time you are in this port?"

No answer.

Her tray of dishes clattered down upon the table, and stepping up to her guest with arms akimbo, she eyed him sharply and said:

"If anyone speaks to me, I always reply; otherwise I would be regarded ill-mannered. I refuse to wait on ill-mannered people."

The stranger raised his eyes and laughed her mockingly in the face. Instantly a thought flashed into her mind. She adjusted her glasses anew, and stared at the rude stranger.

"The sailor lad," she whispered under her breath. "What was that picture he showed me? He returned safely from his

voyage to England, and is now bound for the Mediterranean."

That sailor lad had found his way into her heart. She had had his picture taken, and it now hung on the wall over the safe in her best room. They had conversed several times about his father, and he had even intrusted to her a letter for him, in case he should ever come to the sailors' home. And now he sat there before her —the thought almost took away her breath —it must be the man. He was older, of course, but the likeness was unmistakable.

The man arose, flung some money on the table and prepared to depart.

"Halt!" she cried; "you are not through with me yet, Hartman."

She placed her broad expanse in the doorway, and completely blocked his egress. She would make him give a civil answer to a civil question. There was no doubt in her mind that his name was Hartman, and she had an important mes-

sage for him. If he refused to listen to her, so much the worse for him.

The man stood there as if turned to stone. This woman whom he had never seen before apparently knew him, knew even his name. What did she want of him? What had she to tell him?

"Don't be a fool, Hartman!" she cried, pushing him back from the door. "You have a son, and the finest lad that ever wore a seaman's jacket. What do you mean, man, by refusing to listen to me? Don't you want to hear about your boy? He has been seeking you for a long time. The dear boy is eating his heart out because he can't find his father. What kind of an unnatural father are you anyway? Wait, and I'll show you how he looks today. I had his picture taken, and it's mine, so don't ask for it. Why, man, I love the boy as if he were my own!"

She darted into the next room, and returning thrust a photograph into Hartman's hand. A face full of sunshine and

blue sky met his gaze. Frank eyes looked into his own with an expression that reminded him strangely of the wife he had loved and lost.

"How can a youth so fair have a father so crusty and ill-natured?" thought Mother Lena, as she watched the play of emotions in the man's face.

Silently and long he stood looking at the picture. Yes, this was his son, this was Conrad. It was nothing short of a miracle that the picture had fallen into his hands, and that he was now gazing into the face of his child—the only person in all the world that belonged to him.

"Well," drawled Mother Lena, "what have you to say?"

The man extended his hand, and she noted that it trembled, and that his gloomy features twitched with suppressed emotions. Immediately the buxom mistress of the sailors' home was all sympathy and compassion. She patted him on the shoulder, forced him to sit down,

and informed him that she had a nice, beautiful letter for him from his son. As it was not sealed, she had taken the liberty to read it. The lad could write splendidly. He had a bright head on his shoulders and a warm heart under his seaman's jacket. Thereupon she unlocked a bureau drawer and took out a letter which she handed to him. With bowed head Wolf Hartman read:

"MY DEAR FATHER:—

I waited for you at the gate, but learned that you had left the day before. Now I have lost you, but am trying so hard to find you again. We two belong to each other. You have no one but me, and I have no one but you. Ever since I was a little child I prayed God for you, and I am praying Him every day that I may find you somewhere in the wide world. I feel, somehow, that I will find you, and then I will be a good and faithful son to you, and take care of you when you grow

old. Won't you pray God that we may find each other soon?

Lovingly, your son

CONRAD."

A mighty hand seemed to lay hold on him with iron grip, now dashing him to the ground, now lifting him to heights he had never known before. Long he sat there, the picture in one hand, the letter in the other. His head sank lower upon his breast, and, as never before, tears trickled down his bushy beard.

Mother Lena sat watching him in silence, now and then nodding her head so that her double chin bobbed up and down.

"That's fine; that's what I like to see!" she mumbled to herself.

But when time dragged on, and she thought of the soft bed and good night's sleep she was missing, she said: "Well, Hartman, aren't you going to tell me where you can be found, and where I shall send the boy when he comes? Before

October he can't be here, but he will be sure to come then."

Hartman thanked the kind old woman for what she had done for his son. As he spoke, his deep voice shook with feeling, so that Mother Lena was stirred and found it necessary to wipe her eyes and nose. Then he told her what he was doing, and promised to be back by October if he possibly could.

The dawn of a new day sent its first glimmer of light into Wolf Hartman's darkened heart. Slowly the hope was kindled within him that after years of suffering and anguish happiness would at length blossom forth along his remaining way through life, and this through the love of his son, a love so full and rich that it took no account of the shadow which his own dark past must cast over the life of his son. If this son stood before him now, if his eyes looked lovingly into his own, then the present moment would mark the beginning of a new life

of happiness. But days of trial still intervened before this happiness would be fully his.

The thick mists that often gather at sunrise and form clouds to obscure the sun are a symbol of the experiences that now befell Wolf Hartman. His dawning hope of happiness was obscured by the thought of his years of confinement. Even though his own son never by word or look reproached him, other people would never forget that the father of this son was a convict.

Such gloomy forebodings had been awakened within him by several encounters with acquaintances of former days. They had either pretended not to know him, or had passed him by with a haughty stare. He wondered if they remembered the dying Saviour's words to the repentant robber on the cross: "Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

Therefore he determined to go to sea again as stoker. Because of his efficiency

and faithfulness he might have secured a better position, but he preferred to remain where he was.

As the liner was to depart next day, passengers began to go on board that evening, and together with others Wolf Hartman was ordered to be on hand at the gangway to assist women coming on board.

Among the late arrivals was a young girl of fifteen or sixteen years, lithe and slender of form, and with a veil tied about her hat and under her chin, forming a frame for her pretty face. In one hand she carried a satchel and under the other arm a white poodle dog with pug nose and large, intelligent eyes.

Hartman, standing at the shore end of the gangplank, extended his strong hand to the girl, and as she was about to grasp it, she dropped her dog into the water. With a cry of distress she leaned forward to save her pet, and would have fallen, had not the strong arm of the stoker pre-

vented it. The next instant he dived into the water after the dog. A moment later he restored the dripping pet to her arms, and hurried off to change his wet garments before the grateful owner had time to thank him.

This brave feat, however, won the young girl's heart, and she gave herself no rest until she had discovered the man of the gloomy countenance, who had come on deck to get a breath of fresh air. At first she circled about him, uncertain of his identity; but even when she was sure of this, she feared to address him on account of his forbidding aspect. Before she could summon her courage to speak, he had disappeared into the black depths of the hold.

The next day with courage high she advanced fearlessly upon the man before he could escape. Her rescued pet trotted boldly at her side.

"I haven't had opportunity to thank you yet," she began hurriedly. "It would

have been very hard for me to lose my only traveling companion to the new world across the sea. Will you please accept this?"

So saying, she tried to place in his hand a coin wrapped in a piece of paper.

But Wolf Hartman shook his head, and replied curtly that it wasn't worth any thanks, and he didn't want her money. The young girl looked surprised, but after a moment's hesitation she extended her gloved hand to the grimy stoker, and said:

"But friends we will surely be, we three, won't we, Fido?" just as if this compact of friendship depended on Fido alone.

Fido indicated his willingness by eagerly wagging his tail. Thereupon his mistress waved her hand in a friendly manner to Hartman, and returned to the promenade deck, where groups of passengers were lounging under the canvas awnings.

The stoker followed the girl with his eye, and said under his breath: "A fine girl, I must say, very fine!"

Thus a strange friendship began and developed between these two, outwardly so unlike. For half an hour almost every afternoon one could see the girl with the brown veil sitting on a coil of rope, while the broad-shouldered stoker with grimy hands and gray beard stood before her with hands behind his back listening attentively to what she had to say.

The young girl was none other than our old acquaintance Annie, and she was traveling without companionship to New York. The captain, who had her in charge, looked to her occasionally, but otherwise she had no other companion and protection than her poodle. But she was not unaccustomed to being alone, for she had long been an orphan and had been shifted about from one home to another, and treated well and ill by turns. But of late she had been living with her

dear old Barbara, whose recent death was the immediate cause of Annie's present voyage to America. She was now bound for the home of her only relative on her father's side, who lived on a farm in the Middle West, a thousand miles or more from New York. She was brave and cheerful, and trusted in God. As she had received a good education, she would be able to make her own way in a year or two.

Annie was loud in praises of Barbara. Her old nurse had cared for her as a child, and when she later married, she took Annie into her own home and treated her as her own child. She taught her to pray and to believe in God. All this Annie told the stoker in the course of their daily talks. One day she told him of her little playmate Conrad, who had come to brighten her life in early childhood. He had lived together with his mother and an old blind aunt in a dark house across the al-

ley from her own home. She would dearly love to meet her old playmate again.

Wolf Hartman listened in silence but with growing interest to the sweet confidences of the lovely girl. Slowly the ice around his heart began to melt, and he in turn began to talk about himself, first sparingly, then more freely. One thing, however, he never mentioned, namely, the dark shadow that lay over his life. And yet he longed to lay bare his whole life to her, that he might note what impression it made on her, willing, almost, to regard her judgment on his life as the judgment of God.

Several times he was on the point of telling her openly that she was talking to a released convict, but he could not bring himself to do it. What if she should grow pale with horror, and never want to speak to him again! He felt that it would break his heart. But finally his innate sense of honor compelled him to speak.

Looking him brightly in the face, An-

nie dismissed his confession by remarking: "Conrad's father, also, was sent to prison, so Barbara told me."

How strange her words! Wolf Hartman could only stare at her in silent wonder.

"Why were you sent to prison, Wolf?" she asked after a pause. She always called him Wolf, for that was the only name he had given her.

Then he proceeded to pour the whole sad story into the sympathetic ears of his listener. When he had finished, Annie said:

"Dear Wolf, God and men have different ways of pronouncing judgment. It is most important to understand and accept God's judgment, for it is eternal. Let me repeat to you the verse written on the blank page in my confirmation Bible:

"To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness."

Wolf clasped her small hand gently between his strong hands, as though he

would cling to her always, but suddenly he turned and disappeared below.

While he stared into the flaming fires in the boiler room, a new, strange light began to flood his soul, and he became convinced that Annie's friend, Conrad, was none other than his own son.

The following day the entire matter was cleared up. Annie's eyes filled with tears of happiness at the discovery, and she, in turn, clasped Wolf's hand and would not let it go until he had promised, that he and Conrad would seek her up in her new home in the far West.

When Wolf Hartman bade her farewell in New York, and saw her brown veil disappear in the crowd, he felt that a part of himself had been lost, as he turned sadly away to face the world alone.

The next Sunday he directed his steps to a church for the first time in many years. Annie had urged him to go to church, and there on that Sunday he heard

again the divine promise that had fallen from Annie's lips:

"To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness."

CHAPTER 6.

The Morning Star.

The following October Wolf Hartman again presented himself one day in the hospitable sailors' home presided over by the genial Mother Lena. She received him kindly, but informed him that she had heard nothing of his son or the ship he sailed on, although the latter should have reached port by this time.

This was disappointing news to the father. He had for some time been trying to picture the meeting between them. He tried to console himself with the thought that there was still time for Conrad to arrive before the month was out, and that he would appear almost any day now.

Before the end of the month the ship did arrive, but Conrad was not on board.

The captain, a harsh old sea dog, declared evasively that the lad had taken sick with fever, and had been left at an English port, where he would be likely to remain for some time.

Wolf Hartman felt the disappointment sorely. He decided to remain in port and await his son's coming, but he dreaded the uncertainty of the situation. To while away the time of waiting he obtained work on the docks at good wages.

About a week later Mother Lena received the following letter, the contents of which disturbed her greatly:

"DEAR MOTHER LENA:—

I am not returning with the schooner *Hermann*. The captain is a brute, and he treated us so badly that many deserted and others got sick from the vile food and harsh treatment. I was taken down with a fever, and lay sick for some time in a sailors' hospital in England. But a merciful God restored me to health, and I shipped on an American vessel and am

now in New York. Tomorrow I sail as ordinary seaman on the *Schiller* bound for home.

"Have you heard anything of my father? I thought of him so much during my sickness, and wondered if I would ever find him. It was very lonely for me to lie sick in a strange land and among strange people. Often the fever drove me out of my head. But in my conscious moments I would pray the prayer of my childhood about the Star of Bethlehem that brings help in time of need. And now, farewell, dear Mother Lena. God willing, we will meet again before long.

Your friend,
CONRAD HARTMAN."

The robust old mistress of the sailors' home poured out the vials of her wrath upon all sea captains who treated their men like cattle. She rejoiced, however, to think that Conrad was well again, and was now on his way home on board the

Schiller. In a week at most the ship would reach port.

Yes, the *Schiller* had departed from New York, but near the Scilly Islands in the English Channel it struck a reef in a fog, and hundreds of people met a watery grave.

Instead of the stately liner, these evil tidings reached port and filled many hearts with sorrow and anguish. Wolf Hartman was shaken in his very soul. Was this to be the end of his hopes? All lost so near the goal! What had he to live for if he had lost his boy? Mother Lena shared his sorrow, but had no consolation to give except the mere possibility that Conrad might be numbered among those rescued.

Days and nights of anxious suspense followed. During these Wolf Hartman learned that God uses afflictions to drive His erring children to the mercy seat, and to bring them in submission to His holy will.

At last the list of names of the dead and rescued arrived. The anxious father scanned the list, as if his own life or death hung in the balance. There it was! Among the dead? No, thank God, among the living!

After years of anguish and despair the bright Morning Star had at last dispelled the darkness of the night, and sent its radiance of love and hope and faith into Wolf Hartman's benighted heart.

Father and son met at last in the sailors' home on the docks. Mother Lena conducted them at once into her best room, where they could be alone—such a meeting was not for the eyes of strangers to look upon. She herself, however, could not resist the temptation of peeping through a crack in the door and feasting her eyes on Conrad's glowing countenance, as his father mutely folded him in his strong embrace. At this sight tears streamed down her fat cheeks, and down upon her double chin. Her heart almost

lost a beat when she saw them sit down on her plush-covered sofa—something she never before had permitted anyone to do. But in honor of the occasion she made no objection now.

Hour after hour passed, and yet they lingered on the precious sofa. After years of separation there was so much to say. But best of all, they came to a clear understanding and acknowledgment of God's goodness in His dealings with them, even in their darkest hours, and they accepted their new-found happiness as a gift from their loving Father in heaven.

Some months later father and son made another voyage across the sea, but this time with no intention of returning—much to the sorrow and displeasure of Mother Lena. They had a safe voyage, and from New York they took train for the Middle West to pay the promised visit to Annie. They were so delighted with the country that they decided to cast anchor there for good. Annie felt sure that her uncle

could use two such capable workers on his farm; and as for herself, she could not bear the thought of parting again from Conrad, who had developed into a handsome, upstanding man. Conrad reciprocated Annie's feelings in this respect, and so it naturally came about that in a few years they were married and took over the management of their uncle's farm.

They never forgot, however, the years spent in Twilight Lane, where the Morning Star heralded the dawn of a new and brighter day to come.